THE LAST

Defender of Jerusalem

BY

The Rev. Æneas McDonell Dawson,

Author of "Ode for Dominion Day," "Solitude," "Royalty at Ottawa," "Vision of Burns at Lincluden," "Bombardment of Sonderborg," "Lord Elgin," "Canada" (a descriptive poem), "Russia Punished," "St. Andrew's Day, 1868," "Lament for Bishop Gillis, 1864," "British Columbia," "Fame," "The O'Connell Centenary," "The Heroine of Vercheres," &c., &c., &c.

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THE LAST DEFENDER OF JERUSALEM.

Simon, during the siege of Jerusalem, was in the Upper City; but when the Roman army had gotten within the walls, and were laying the City waste, he then took the most faithful of his friends with him, and among them some that were stone-cutters, with those iron tools that belong to their occupation, and as great a quantity of provisions as would suffice them for a long time, and let himself down into a certain subterranean cavern that was not visible above ground.—Josephus, Wars of the Jews, Book VII., Cap. I.

The Chief, tired of his dismal abode, resolves to seek terms with the conqueror. His followers endeavor to dissuade him.

THE SOLDIERS.

Trust not the Roman, Chief, he thirsts for blood.
Still flows o'er Sion's brow the gory flood
That all but quenched the fast devouring fires
The Temple swept, and dwellings of our sires.

SIMON.

In fiercest battle still would I rejoice,
And fighting bravely, perish, were my choice;
But who can bear this lingering, living death,
When scarce our own we call the doubtful breath
That holds our flickering life? E'en in the grave
We die not! In this dark, inglorious cave,
Famished, obscure, pine we from day to day;
Bright hope we cherished long, withholds it's ray,
And we, our City's stay, shall disappear,
While none may o'er us drop a patriot tear.
I'll to the Roman host. When they shall see

Great Juda's Chief, as he was wont to be,
Like David in his glory, rich arrayed
In robe of state, the sceptre, long which swayed
The hosts of Israel, on Sion borne
Amid the Temple's ruined walls forlorn,
War's rage to reverence and awe will change;
And who can tell what terms may then arrange
The haughty conqueror? Romans of old
In adverse fortune thus their sorrow told:
In solemn grandeur sate the Senate grave
Amid their fallen walls, and calmly gave
Unto the conquering foe the fearless word
Could awe command. Though broken was their sword,
With mind unquelled, certain they held the Fate
Of Sovereign Rome, as in her pristine pride and state;
Her destiny secure—that wide should be
Her rule, extending far, from sea to sea.
The victor Gaul was moved. Such words to hear
Was like amazing thunder to his ear.

Vainly to alter Fate's decrees shall strive
Earth's Powers. From stern, unchanging fate derive
The mighty Romans glory in the past,
Conquests unnumbered and an Empire vast.
No more than to Rome will Fate prove faithless
Unto Juda's race. Fallen, yet not the less
It's destined course our Nation will pursue,
The reign so bright of David glad renew,
And Israel's Power. Rome the magic word
Shall hear, to Fate do homage, and the sword
Forever sheath. Her Chief, in war renowned,
(For wisdom more all men his praises sound),
The destiny shall learn,—from Juda's land
The Prince, o'er tribes of earth and Empires grand
To rule, will come, in Time's appointed hour,
In Rome's despite, and when her sway's no more.

THE SOLDIERS.

Too fairly judgest Thou the Roman foe,
In vain to look for mercy in our woe.
No weapon know they save their reeking sword;
Væ victis ever their relentless word.
Saw'st not their fury when the battle raged,
And Israel 'gainst mighty Rome yet waged
A doubtful war? Saw'st how their savage hands
O'er homes and Temple hurled their flaming brands?
Nor pious Titus, nor the Gods of Rome
Their wrath could stay. No single sacred home
They spared in Israel. The Temple walls
They fierce attacked! In vain their Leader calls
That they should, reverent, save the holy place;
His words they heed not, fury gains apace.
The best and bravest, noble Titus falls;
Yet still the onward tide of ruin swells.
Reckless each soldier speeds with fiery brand—
No earthly power can stay his fated hand.
Lo! now the spreading flame commingling shows
In the vast stream of molten gold that flows
From out the holy shrine, the richest blood
Of conquered Israel, the gory flood
O'ermastering, at times, the raging fire;
Powerless, meanwhile, to quench the maddening ire
Of the destroying Roman,—seeks he still
Destruction; nought can stay his barbarous will
Nor hinder, till his direful work be done,
And there remain no stone upon a stone
Of Juda's dwellings and her Temple grand,
Men's wonder, and the glory of our land.
Trust not Vespasian! True, the sacred Fane
He would have rescued,—only to profane
By foulest heathen rites the holy place,

And with his gods of lifeless stone disgrace
The sanctuary, where propitious dwelt,
To eye of man invisible, yet felt,
The God of Israel, our fathers' God!
On faithless earth this Fane his sole abode.
Trust not fierce Titus, who could mocking spare
Ten thousand warriors who, in sad despair,
Ignobly sued for life, then cruel held
In bondage, some their fathers' land expelled
That they for hateful Rome should toil and slave,
The rest to torture and to slaughter gave.
Hope not that David's royal robe and crown
Romans will reverence. When stood alone
That Holy One, so justly prophet named,
For purity of life and wisdom famed,
By Israel abandoned, Him they scorned,
With sceptre and with royal garb adorned,
Then jeering cried: Behold! O, Jews, we bring
Forth to your view, Him you have styled your King!
So, Thou, our Chief, in David's robes arrayed,
By traitorous Rome wilt surely be betrayed.

And now Simon thinking that he might be able to astonish and delude the Romans, put on a white frock and buttoned upon him a purple cloak, and appeared out of the ground where the Temple had formerly stood.

At the first, indeed, those who saw him were greatly astonished, and stood still where they were. But afterwards they came nearer to him and asked him who he was. Now Simon would not tell them, but bade them call for their Captain; and when they ran to call him, Terentius Rufus, who was left to command the army there, came to Simon and learned of him the whole truth, and kept him in bonds, and let Cæsar know that he was taken. . . . Simon was brought to Cæsar in

bonds, when he was come to that Cæsarea, which was on the sea side, who gave orders that he should be kept against the triuumph he was to celebrate at Rome upon this occasion.—Josephus, Wars of the Jews, Book VII., C. II.

Meanwhile, Titus Vespasian distributes rewards to his soldiers, and offers sacrifices to the Gods at Cæsarea by the sea.

Now, as on the most solemn festal day,
Around him Titus called the grand array
Of conquering armies, anxious to shower
On valor's sons, pillars of Roman power,
Their honors dearly won. Ne'er had they striven
With foes so brave,—Rome's Eagles all but riven
From the firm grasp of Roman arms, their fame
Quivering in the scales of Fate, Rome's high name,
The dread of nations, by Jewry alone
Defied, and but for destiny, out-shone.
For warriors all prepared he brightest meeds.
On those who, foremost, by their valorous deeds
Excelled, were crowns of pearl and gold bestowed;
Of others, not a few, the glory showed
Rare and most costly ornaments displayed
Around their necks, was then advancement made
Of each and all who most conspicuous shone,
By their exploits had special honor won.
Now said the Chief: "To them who rule in Heaven,
The immortal Gods, be thanks and glory given.
First to Israel's God, the Great Unknown,
Let Romans' grateful praise be duly shown.
Remember ye those towers on Sion hill,
Firm knit, and strong, proof against Roman skill.
In vain those rock-built bulwarks to assail.
Impregnable! nought 'gainst them could prevail.
The Jews, demented by their God, forsook
Those strongholds sure, their place we boldly took,

And victory was ours. When raged the strife
In mad confusion, and for dearest life
Each side contended, wildly their red brands
They cast into the Holy Place. Commands
My soldiers heeded not, but rashly joined
In the dread revel, with blind Jews combined
In fell destruction, and to ruin gave
The glorious Fane it was our will to save.
Best of the herds let bleed in sacrifice.
When, with our vows, the victims shall suffice,
Then leave we Cæsarea by the sea—
Inland from thence our pleasant course shall be,
And with our faithful legions we shall hie
To Cæsar's strong city named Philippi,
There to the Gods libations new we'll pour,
And grateful pray that long may last Rome's power.

Terentius brings tidings of the complete destruction of Jerusalem, and there are further celebrations at Cæsarea Philippi.

Terentius now from Juda's wasted land
To Titus came. By Cæsar's high command
This depute ruler of the Jewish war
Set forth how fields and cities, near and far,
Lay desolate; how Sion's lofty hill,
Where stood the Holy House, O sum of ill!
New forms assumed; no edifices grand,
Nor vestige of the Sacred Fane; the land,
Torn by the plough, in seemless heaps now lay,
Like mountain, or woodland, or barren way.
All o'er the city passed the ploughshare too;
Foul sod and rubbish only met the view.*

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* Terentius Rufus ploughed up Sion as a field, and made Jerusalem become as heaps, and the mountain of the House as the high places of a forest.—*Josephus.*
"Sion shall be ploughed as a field, and Jerusalem shall be as a heap of stones, and the mountain of the Temple as the high places of the forests."—Micheas iii. 12; Jer. xxvi. 18.

"Our victory complete. The rebel land
Hath drank the blood of that seditious band.
More than a million of the stubborn Jews
The desolate fields of Israel strews.†
In bonds we hold some ninety thousand more;‡
Of gold and conquered treasure countless store.
Proclaim the feast. Let fresh libations flow,
And hecatombs our grateful homage show
To Rome's immortal Gods, the guardian stay
Of Roman arms that ward all ills away.
Let choicest incense on each altar smoke,
And whilst ye, reverent, the Gods invoke,
With fragrant spices fill the lofty Fane,
With sweetest perfumes such as richest plain
Of blest Arabia can generous bestow,
Cassia, stacte and cinnamon, that show
With Galbanum, Onycha, frankincense,
True worship,—homage of the soul intense."

Lament of Israel's Captive Prince.

Sad scenes are these to vanquished Israel:
Thus speaks the fallen Chief his grief and wail:
"O darkest day, loved friends, that e'er unrolled
Relentless Fate! Doomed are we to behold,
We here in bonds, the hateful fiendish deeds
Of heathen Rome, that thousand victims speeds,
In hatred of our name, and with her gods
Confounds the God of Israel! No odds
She knows 'twixt Him who, awful, reigns in Heaven,
And the dumb idols to her blindness given.
With rites detestable she dares profane,
With victims' blood, spices and incense vain,

† 1,100,000 Jews perished during the siege of Jerusalem.
‡ 97,000 were made captive in the whole course of the war.

The worship of our fathers; in her hand
The censer bearing, erst in Juda's land
Sweet odors poured, the angels bore on high,
Rich fragrance, offerings meet to ascend the sky.
Titus thanks God! vain mockery of praise,
Whilst incense to his idols he can raise,
Holy and impure at once basely thrown
To lifeless stocks and Him who's God alone!
How foul the revels of the Roman horde!
All sorts of meats unclean defile their board.
They glory in excess and pride in games
Marked by such dastard cruelty as shames
Humanity. Of beasts the savage fights,
Wild beasts devouring men, their chief delights.
To cheer them Africa's fierce tigers play
With limbs of tortured captives; in the fray
Lions half starved commingling wildly tear
Each victim quivering in extreme despair.
Alas for Israel! are barb'rous thrown
Her brave defenders to the brutes that own
No mercy. Some, in fragments rudely torn
By ruthless soldiers, whilst are fiercely borne
Others, not few, to instant death. No end
To sanguinary deeds. Even willing lend
Their aid to slaughter's work they who had fought
When o'er us victory was won, dear bought.
Whom woful war, with beasts and murderers, spares,
The *pious* Titus sells, like common wares,
And trading Egypt, eager, counts rich gains*

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* Titus Cæsar appointed one of his freedmen, and also Fronto, one of his own friends, to determine the fate of everyone according to his merits. So this Fronto slew all those who had been seditious and robbers; but of the young men he chose out the tallest and most beautiful and reserved them for the triumph. And as for the rest of the multitude that were above 17 years of age he put them into bonds and sent them to the Ægyptian mines.—*Josephus.*

For the prophecy see Deut. XXVIII, 68; Jer., Hosea, Esdras, &c.

From Juda's sons, rejoicing in their pains.
Some saves he, not for love he bears our race,
But to ensure lost Israel's disgrace.
To Rome he means that we should humbled go,
And there of Cæsar's triumph crown the show.
Thus glories Titus in his conquering powers.
Defeat, meanwhile, and contumely ours.
O'er all these eastern climes unquestioned sway
Vespasian holds. Ere long speeds he away
In navies grand, that on the midland tide
Spread far their swelling sails, and proudly ride
Triumphant ; hastes he to Rome with rich spoil
Of subject nations—such of warlike toil
The Roman prize. With these, when winter's o'er,
Will join the trophies sad of Titus' power.
Madly then will Rome, to slavery consigned.
Joy in her shame, blindness with chains combined.
Yet comfort, ye, my friends, the book of Fate
Anew shall be unrolled, and from that date,
Not distant far, divided shall appear
That Empire grand the vanquished nations fear.
Ere many days have sped, around these shores
Defiance will be thrown to Roman powers ;
A conquering prince will rudely trample down
Rome's tyrant,* and the Imperial crown
A mockery shall be, and men will scorn
The name of Roman now so proudly borne.
More yet a captive Israelite would say :
When name and Empire both have passed away
Of haughty Rome, a people, yet to be,
Will conquering come, athwart the foaming sea,
And glorious liberty, till then unknown,
These lands throughout will plant her golden throne.

* This was done when Sapor, King of Persia, having conquered the Emperor Vitellian, made use of his body as a stepping block when it pleased him to mount his horse.

Vespasian, the elder, borne to power by the victorious Legions, was now the undisputed master of the Eastern world. It remained for him to pacify the West, and consolidate the Imperial Government. For this purpose, he resolves to visit Rome. Titus also determines to visit that city, where the honors of a triumph await him. In his train are such of the captives as had been spared. Among these are Simon and John, the last Princes of the Jews.

Too long had sorrow spread its mourning pall
O'er humbled Rome. Her fated day of thrall
With Galba, Gallienus, Nero flown,
And coarse Vitellius at length o'erthrown,
She joys once more, the nations far and wide
Powerful to sway. Now, as in pristine pride,
She bids her Cæsar home, the meed of Fame
Decrees, in triumph hails Vespasian's name.
Nor can she wait until the grand array
Her gates approach. Anxious she speeds away
Her wise and warlike Emperor to greet,
Crown her deliverer with honors meet.
Citizens and brave soldiers haste along,
Alike patricians and plebeians throng,
And crowd Rome's Senators the flowery way,
The path of Him, the Chief, who late could stay
The tide of ruin, o'er an empire spread
In devastating waves, that filled with dread
The stoutest Roman heart, lest now their land
Should fall and forfeit all its conquests grand.
Vespasian comes. Round his triumphal car
Lie heaped the trophies of victorious war.
The allied nations willing homage pay;
Sad and reluctant, Juda owns his sway.

Next to Vespasian, in the glorious train,
Is noble Titus seen, who rent in twain
The pride of Israel; and he, that son *
In bloom of youth, who yet was only known

* Domitian.

For valorous deeds, for battles bravely fought
And honor for his country fearless sought.
Each Roman warrior, then, of highest name,
Who often valiant strove, in fields of fame,
With Titus and Vespasian, faithful toiled
In northern climes, barbarians despoiled,
Or sternly awed the Asiatic race,
While Egypt's sons compelled they to embrace
The laws of Rome. They, next, Parthian hordes
That powerful quelled, to Rome's aspiring Lords
Made subject Persia's tribes, and by the stream
Of grand Euphrates conquering caused to gleam
The Imperial sword, who to Indus' wave
And fabled Ganges, by their valor gave
Bright proofs of Roman power, where'er could soar
Rome's eagles, o'er each Eastern sea and shore.
Downcast and sorrowing came the captive band,
They who for liberty, in Juda's land,
So valiantly had fought, who oft the tide
Of raging legions dauntless could abide,
At times roll back, and almost hope to save
Their much loved country fated to it's grave.
Near to the vanquished were the spoils Rome won
From agonizing nations, lost, out-done,
Struggling for liberty, now borne away,
In savage pomp, to grace the grand array
Of Cæsar's triumph, by glad Romans hailed
As proudest trophies, by the fallen bewailed.
The broidered robe, the cup of sacrifice,
The golden candlestick, each costly prize,
From holy shrine and Temple rudely riven—
By Fate or fortune to the victor given,—
All rich and beauteous things, that could adorn
A Roman pageant, in the train are borne.
Not Israel's spoils alone, richest dyes
Of Tyre and Sidon 'mid the pomp descries

The admiring Roman. Babylonian art
In rich profusion bears a wondrous part.
Are seen, in silver, ivory and gold,
Choice objects in variety untold.
There, precious stones, as if no longer rare,
Shine from their golden settings rich and fair.
Nought could surpass the marvellous display
From every clime that 'neath Rome's sceptre lay.
Of many nations' wealth this dazzling show
Moved slowly on, like to some river's flow.
Nor were forgot the painter's and the sculptor's arts,
Well planned to prove how Romans played their parts,
In fields and sieges, 'gainst the strongest foes.
Here a fierce legion, stoutly warring, strews
The earth with slaughtered enemies, when lo!
Forced gates and crumbling towers the pictures show.
Best spectacle of all to Roman eyes,
The worst of war's sad horrors 'neath the skies,
Grandest rivers, first from their mountain spring
That sweetly flow, then swiftly ruin bring
To devastated fields, en either side
The ghastly wrecks of war's destructive tide.
Next come, for heathen Rome a fitting sight,
Rome's Gods, reputed source of Roman might.
Of every shape and hue the Olympian powers,
In massive gold with gems adorned, now towers
A Roman Deity. Around, with art
And skill set forth, some lesser Gods bear part
In the proud pageant, all curiously wrought
In richest ores, by Roman valor bought.
Huge ships, as if on Ocean's swelling tide
Arrayed for battle, slowly seem to glide
Along the crowded way, a novel sight,
Amid the wealth and pomp that showed Rome's might.
Now, as at length, the Capitol was gained,
The holiest task sublime remained—

The gods to thank. Nor yet could this be done,
Whilst of the rebel foe there lived that one,
Who most defied the world-wide Roman sway,
And, for a time, it's vengeful arm could stay.

The last of Israel's Princes in the Roman Forum.

In times long gone had stormy scenes displayed
Rome's Forum. Dreadful more the *role* it played
When o'er its wide extent raged loud and long
Of wrathful citizens the surging throng.
Calm 'mid the storm was seen the captive Jew.
"Hear me, O, Romans! what I say is true:
Light in Death's shadow shines, and mystic Fate
Of times to come reveals the hidden state.
Great now your power, composed each civil broil,
Whilst victory rewards the warlike toil
Of Titus and Vespasian. Yet will lower
New skies, and war clouds fatal to your power
Will burst o'er Rome, and as a howling waste
Our land you've made, you, as is meet, will taste
The bitter cup, ye, vengeful, poured so free,
In blind obedience to Heaven's decree,
On fated Israel. Sweet peace now reigns;
Yet ply in darkest Erebus their pains
The hostile Genii, the cauldron mix
That swells with destiny, will certain fix
Rome's fate, to desolation ruthless give
Your city fair, mistress of all that live.
Foes press on every side, north, east and west,
Speed fiercest hordes, the Furies' fell behest
On Rome to execute. First tramples down
Victorious Persia the Imperial crown.
Wealth, art, letters—all that is noble grand
The savage Goth and Vandal now command.
Than Hunnic Attila, more barbarous still,
Of sternest mind, indomitable will,
A race uncouth, from the cold Northern Sea,

Headlong will pour, and, as the Fates decree,
Rome's boundless wealth will scatter far and wide,
Her kingdom whelming in the gathering tide.
Her ill assorted empire, part of clay,
Of iron part, shall crumble to decay ;
Her name, so famous now, shall pass away,
While Juda's land, that you, so cruel, chose
To desolate, will blossom like the rose,
And David's glory and his royal crown
Restored will be, enjoy their old renown ;
A Prince in justice will the nations sway,
And mightiest monarchs willing homage pay."

The excited multitude, delirious with joy, torture and put to death Simon and John, the last of Israel's commanders.

Swift to Rome's capitol the tidings flew ;
The people's joy to maddened frenzy grew.
The last of conquered enemies lay low—
May now proceed the solemn pomp and show.
To Jove Capitoline were victims slain,
While smoke of fragant incense rose amain.
Pious Vespasian, veiling his dark brow
In the Imperial robe, poured forth his vow,
In suppliant mood, to the Olympian throng,
Earnest beseeeching they would, true and long,
Hold rule o'er Rome, and ever faithful guide
Her destinies, maintain her hard-won pride,
Humble her foes, grant victory, her sway
Constant secure, and gracious point the way
To glories new, in fateful war's great toils
Vouchsafe success, and, free from civil broils,
Let happy Rome e'er bask in the bright sun
Of peace, through ages long, till time be done.